

The Institution of Family with Special Reference to Islam

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Decline in concept of family

The society of western countries as a whole is in deep crises. This is primarily due to breakdown of family institution because of dominant liberal forces.

Family is the basic foundation of any society and the strength and weakness of family determines the strength as well as weakness of any society. If the family institution is weak, nothing else can make-up for this weakness.

The breakdown of the western families is proceeding at an alarming speed. The increasing trend of divorces shows that west tops the world in this aspect. In 2022-23 the US has alone higher rates of divorces than most parts of the world. The United States crude divorce rate is 2.5 while the worldwide average crude divorce rate is just 1.8

Two of the biggest problems among children are teenage pregnancy and drug abuse. In 2019-20 89% of pregnancies in age 15-19 years were outside of marriage and the newborn babies were left at the doors of others or dropped into dumpsters. Among these, drinking alcohol and use of drugs have also bad consequences for a family.

THE INSTITUTION OF FAMILY IN ISLAM

Ismail faruqi, a great Islamic intellectual who was a professor of religion at the temple University and the founder of international institute of Islamic thought in Herndon Virginia. He observed

"The Islamic family if it is rightly Islamic is a very ideal to which western people aspire. The reality of western people today stands dramatically opposite, it seems they stand at the bottom of human, social and ethical development. The Islamic family with its ideals, with its norms and standards, stands at the opposite heights. Therefore, there could be no better way of convincing western men and women of the values of Islam and greatness of Islam than tk invite them to visit a Muslim family"

However, he warned muslims "But then the muslim family must be a good one. It must be truly Islamic and must live up the standards, expected from an Islamic family"

Divinely inspired institution

In islam family is divinely inspired and ordained institution. It was not evolved timely through human experimentations. The human race is product of this institution and not the other way round

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The Qur'an says " O humanity! Be mindful of your Lord Who created you from a single soul, and from it He created its mate,1 and through both He spread countless men and women. And be mindful of Allah—in Whose Name you appeal to one another—and 'honour' family ties. Surely Allah is ever Watchful over you.(Nisa 4:1-10)

To start a family one is required to get marry. The Messenger of God said" Marriage is part of my sunnah whoever runs from my path, is not from amongst us"(Sunan Ibn e majah 1846)

The structure of the Muslim family

The structure of the Muslim family is divided into three parts. The first one are the ones who are not closest consist of husband, wife, their children and their parents(if living with them)

The second ones are middle fold of the family consists of a number of close relatives, weather they live together or not and have special claim on each other, who moves freely inside the house and to whom marriage is forbidden known as Mehram.

This constitutes the real core of the family sharing each other's joys, happiness, sorrows, hopes and fears. All those relationships which are outside the above mentioned relations constitutes the outer periphery of the family and they too have their own rights and obligations but not like first two.

Roles of spouses

Islam assigns different roles and responsibilities at the same time to both men and women so, that they don't compete against each other but compliment each other.

Islam assigns the family leadership role to men and at the same time men have been given the responsibility to provide for the family and to be their protector as well

The Qur'an says" Husbands are the protectors and maintainers of their wives because God has given them one more strength than the other and because they support them for their means(An Nisa 4:34)

On the other hand women have given the responsibilities to make the house functioning, the responsibility of child rearing and upbringing, their education, orientation, character building and general initiation into religion and culture. It is because of this aspect that family care becomes a full time job. No other institution or even a number of institutions together can take care of this function.

However, differences in roles or functions between men and women does not mean differences in humanity or that one is superior to other. In this regard the Qur'an says" if any do deeds of righteousness be they male or female-and have faith will enter Paradise. And not the least injustice will be done to them"(Nisa 4:124)

Separate family system

Islam prefers separate family system instead of joint family system.

It is based on the principals that women should not mingle with men, emphasizes separate domestic arrangements

The Qur'an says "And tell the believing women that they must lower their gazes and guard their private parts, and must not expose their adornment, except that which appears thereof, and must wrap their bosoms with their shawls, and must not expose their adornment, except to their husbands or their fathers or the fathers of their husbands, or to their sons or the sons of their husbands, or to their brothers or the sons of their brothers or the sons of their sisters, or to their women, or to those owned by their right hands, or male attendants having no (sexual) urge, or to the children who are not yet conscious of the shames of

women. And let them not stamp their feet in a way that the adornment they conceal is known. And repent to Allah O believers, all of you, so that you may achieve success" (an nur 24:31)

The list doesn't include the husband's brother nor his nephews. That's why it is preferred to have separate family system and in case if one is not capable to provide a separate house then a believing woman must therefore keep, aloof from them as well as from other strangers.

In joint family system there becomes difficult to maintain distances from non-mehrams and once a Muslim woman shows her beauty to the brother or nephew of her husband, she has broken out the secure boundary of Islamic commandments. Hence, it is always preferable in Islam to have separate house for wives to maintain the privacy and chastity.

Benefits of the Islamic family system

The Islamic family system offers a number of benefits, including:

Provides a stable and supportive environment for children to grow up in. The Islamic family system provides children with the love, support, and guidance they need to thrive. It also teaches them the importance of Islam and Islamic values.

Teaches children the importance of respect, compassion, and responsibility.

The Islamic family system teaches children to respect their parents, elders, and other family members. It also teaches them to be compassionate towards others and to help those in need.

Creates a strong bond between family members. The Islamic family system emphasizes the importance of family ties. It encourages family members to spend time together and to support each other through thick and thin.

Provides emotional and financial support to family members in need. The Islamic family system provides a safety net for family members who are struggling. It encourages family members to help each other financially and emotionally.

Helps to promote social cohesion and stability. The Islamic family system helps to promote social cohesion and stability by teaching children the importance of responsibility, respect, and compassion. It also encourages family members to support each other and to contribute to the community.

The Islamic family system is based on the principles of love, respect, compassion, and responsibility. It is a

system that is designed to promote strong and loving families.

Challenges facing the Islamic family system today

The Islamic family system is facing a number of challenges today. These challenges include:

The breakdown of traditional family values. The breakdown of traditional family values is a global phenomenon. It is due to a number of factors, including the rise of individualism, materialism, and secularism.

The increasing influence of Western culture. The increasing influence of Western culture is also posing a challenge to the Islamic family system. Western culture often promotes values that are incompatible with Islamic values, such as individualism, sexual promiscuity, and materialism.

The economic pressures of modern life. The economic pressures of modern life can also make it difficult for families to stay together. Parents may be forced to work long hours to provide for their families, which can leave them with little time to spend with their children.

The rise of social media and other forms of technology. The rise of social media and other forms of technology is also posing a challenge to the Islamic family system. Social media can be a distraction and can lead to family members spending less time together.

Conclusion:

"Islam protects the honour, chastity, purity and lineage of the family. so, it encourages marriage and forbids free mixing of men and women"

Islam gives each and every family member some important roles to play to maintain the balance in the family as well as society. So, parents should take care of their children and give them good Islamic and cultural values. Childrens are to listen, obey and respect the rights of both father and mother. Husbands are the protectors and maintainers of the Muslim families while wife has her own roles like taking care of childrens, their upbringing, their education, character building and many more.

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